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ABSTRACT

This 15-hour training module is directed toward CETA counselors, interviewers, trainers, and related service deliverers whose client populations are youth, adolescents and young adults. The purpose of the program is to help trainees upgrade their small group skills. Group training experiences are based on the Personal Mastery Counseling approach. Topics covered include: theoretical background on effective counseling; client preparation for group counseling; priority-based decisions as to counseling focus; behavioral change goals; beginning counseling groups; counseling skills; group counselor interventions; and group structures. Each trainee will experience being a counseling group member, co-lead a group, and receive group-skill upgrading reading materials. Training methods include: lecturettes, counseling groups, demonstrations, simulations, group discussion, and exercises involving subgroups. (Author/JLL)

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WORKING WITH YOUTH IN A GROUP SETTING: A TRAINING MODEL

A Higher Education
Training Monograph

No. 16 in a series

Produced by:
Manpower Development Higher Education System (MDHES)
Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan

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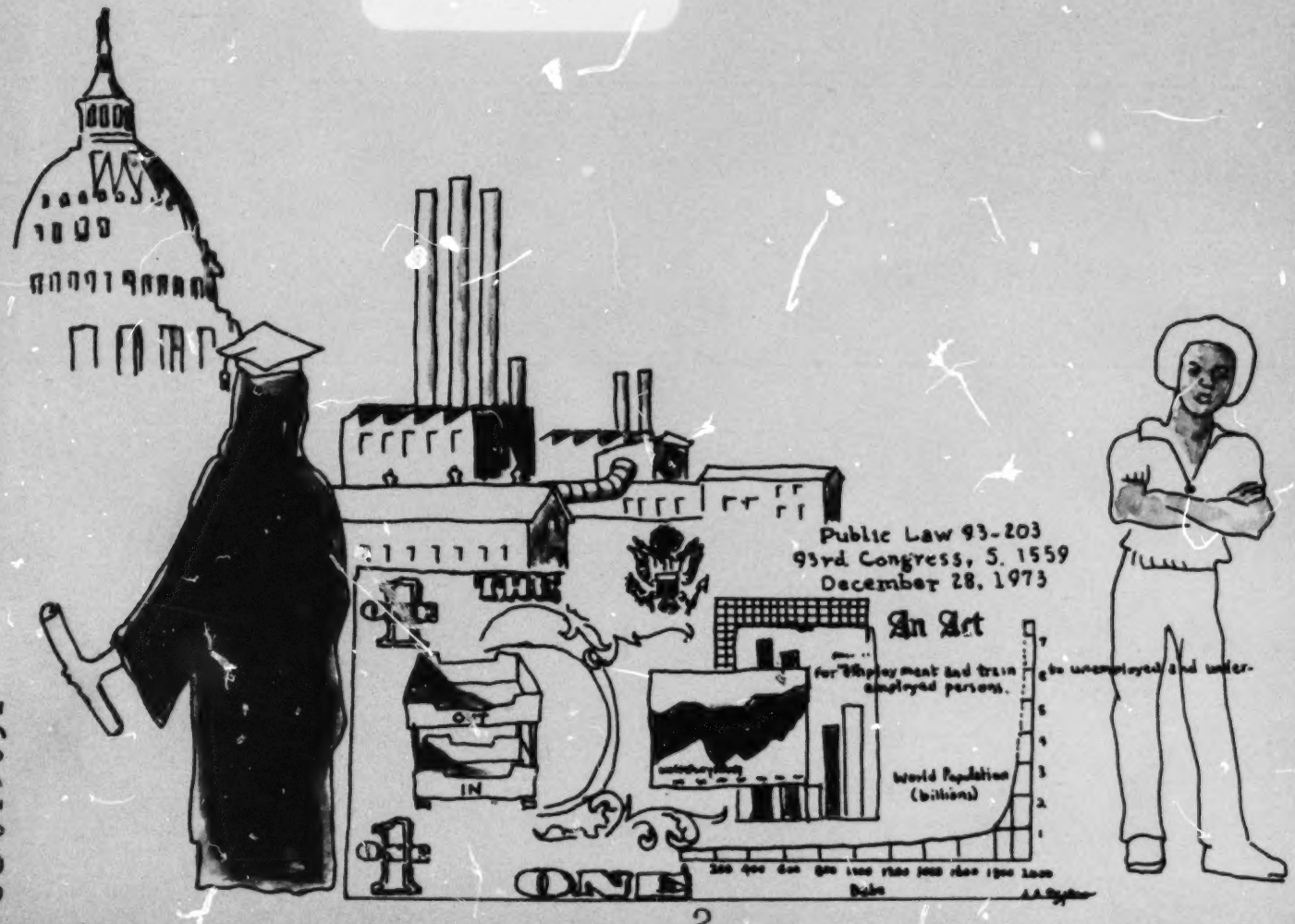

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Working With Youth in a Group Setting

A Training Monograph

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph is designed to provide trainers of CETA counselors and related service deliverers with a sequenced program of learning activities which will enable the participants to work more effectively with youth in small groups.

These assumptions undergird the package described in this monograph:

A.) Not all youth are at the same level of development in all behavioral dimensions, even though they are age-mates. Those youth at lower behavioral performance levels can benefit from the peer-help which those youth can provide who are at higher performance levels in any given behavioral dimension.

B.) Such peer-help is best made available to the helpees in small group settings (T.J. Vriend, 1969).

C.) Any service deliverer who works with youth in small groups needs specialized training in group leadership skills.

The end goal for Manpower Develop ment and Training programs, especially where youth are the target population to be served, is increased growth and development of subjects leading to successful entry into the employment market. One way to conceptualize such development is to delineate vocationally related behaviors, those developmental tasks which lead to vocational maturity, as they are appropriate to any given life stage (J. Vriend, 1969). Thus, interpersonal skills or general knowledge about the world of work, to take but two variables, would differ for the vocationally mature fifteen-year-old and the eighteen-year-old, the expectation being that the latter would have the greater skills and knowledge. It is assumed in this monograph that the service deliverers for whom this group-skills training is designed would be cognizant in no small measure of the concept of vocational development and would

as a matter of course explore status in a range of areas to arrive at some assessment of the performance and knowledge of their charges. These areas would include, among others, vocational aspirations, vocational expectations, vocational planning skills, self-knowledge, world of work knowledge, interpersonal skills, time, energy, and money management, vocational aptitudes, work experience, ability to handle environmental stress, ability to control one's negative emotions, understanding how to promote physical health and well-being, to name but a handful of vital dimensions. (Since the Coleman Report (1966) which warned against the deadening affects of a lack of "destiny control" for disadvantaged youth, the background literature of use to such workers has become extensive and readily available and there is no need to go into it herein.)

The sequenced group training experiences detailed in this monograph have, additionally, been based on the Personal Mastery Counseling approach. This essentially empirical approach, developed by Vriend and Dyer (see bibliography), incorporates these fundamental propositions: 1.) that any behavior is learned and its owner performs the behavior at some level of effectiveness up to and including mastery; 2.) that the service deliverer is able to function at a higher level in the focused-upon behavior than the client; 3.) that self-enhancing behavioral change is the goal of the service; 4.) that behavior is mental and emotional, as well as physical; 5.) that effective interpersonal behaviors are the most difficult to learn and among the most neglected or poorly taught by cultural institutions and teaching agents. While these precepts are not the only ones by far, they are central to the concept of Personal Mastery Counseling, a service delivery system which builds upon Abraham Maslow's (1954) work.

SCOPE OF THE TRAINING

This training will take place in two successive days, eight training hours on the first day

and seven hours the following day, with an hour's break for lunch on each day. The training is directed toward CETA counselors, interviewers, trainers, and related service deliverers whose client population is youth, adolescents and young adults.

The training can best be delivered by individuals schooled and experienced in Personal Mastery Counseling and group skills who have proven effectiveness in training others. Such effectiveness would include the ability to evaluate and report the behavioral progress of the trainees, and to instruct the trainees in making accurate self-evaluations in a final narrative progress report by providing relevant criterion-based guidelines.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the program described in this monograph is to provide training experiences for the trainees which will help to upgrade their small groups skills, thus enabling them to perform more effectively with their clients in small group settings.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of the training, it is expected that the participants will:

1.) Be able to explain the necessary theoretical background for an understanding of how effective counseling works, especially as it is done in groups.

2.) Know how to prepare clients for a group counseling experience.

3.) Know how to explore those pertinent areas of a client's world which will yield where the most potent counseling focus ought to be. This is to say that the trainees will know how to make priority-based decisions relating to the most productive use of the group counseling time.

4.) Know how to help clients set effective behavioral change goals.

5.) Know several different ways to productively begin a counseling group.

6.) Have upgraded their counseling skills.

7.) Have learned at least ten specific group counselor interventions.

8.) Have learned at least five structures for a group which can be invoked to increase productivity when a group session flags.

9.) Have had at least six and 1/2 hours of experience as a member of a counseling group. This experience has the following objectives:

   a.) To help each member become more fully-functioning in his or her personal life.

   b.) To help each member empirically understand and ingest how effective group participation works by being a client.

10.) Have co-led a group for at least one-half hour and received supervisory feedback on his/her leader behaviors.

11.) Have the materials which enable them to do further reading for specific group-skill upgrading.

TRAINING METHODS

This training experience is designed for a complement of approximately 20 trainees for an optimal experience. A smaller number will allow for greater intensification of the experience and a larger number will reduce the amount of time for personalization and supervisory feedback. The design presumes that the trainee group can be divided into two subgroups of ten or so for the small group activities which will approximate, in the training situation, the kind of group setting in which the trainees will later serve clients.

Because the model for working in small groups presumes co-leaders, three assistants to the chief trainer are needed to be a part of the optimal training staff in order that all simulation groups are co-led.

Training methods include:

- lecturettes
- counseling groups
- demonstrations
- simulations
- group discussions
- exercises involving subgroups

Facilities which allow for the two halves of the total group of approximately 20 are preferred.

The specific materials needed for the training group, aside from duplicated hand-outs included in the Appendix, ought to include the following:

1.) Counseling Techniques That Work, by Wayne W. Dyer and John Vriend. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1977. (A copy of the book ought to be given to each trainee.)

2.) 2 copies of this 8-hour cassette tape series ought to be made available to the training group: Counseling for Personal Mastery: A Cassette Tape Series for Building Counselor Competencies. Washington, D.C.: American Personnel and Guidance Association Press, 1974.

It is presumed that the two-day training workshop, hereinafter described in hour-by-hour specifics, will enable the participants to function more effectively in small groups when administering to their clients' needs.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

DAY ONE:

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Warm-up. Welcome, and a preview of coming attractions: how the time will be spent, outcome expectations. Introduction of trainers and trainees.

9:00 - 9:45 a.m. Lecturette. Theoretical background of Personal Mastery Counseling (PMC).

It is essential to the attainment of workshop outcomes that CETA counselor trainers present a solid theoretical model of Personal Mastery Counseling to the trainees in order that group leader trainee functioning in any given instance will be based on a rationale. Practice without theory is often short-sighted, arbitrary, and, not infrequently, self-serving. Vital theoretical understandings are outlined below:

I. Concepts of human behavior.

A. For the purposes of PMC, all behavior is divisible into three categories: mental, emotional, and physical.

1. Behaviors occur in these categories simultaneously, which is to say that a person, during hours of consciousness, is always thinking, feeling, and doing.

B. All behavior is neutral, neither good nor bad. If a behavior is called good or bad, or anything else, such calling is only an editorial opinion about the behavior, not the behavior itself.

C. All behavior is specific, occurring in the here and now. It can be identified, specified, and described, even though it takes place in a context.

D. All behavior is chosen by the person owning it.

E. All behavior results in pay-offs to the person choosing it, even though the pay-offs may be self-harming.

II. Emotions

A. An emotion can be defined as a mentally-caused physiological reaction.

1. Emotions are produced by thoughts.

2. Bodily reactions caused by thoughts are numerous: glandular secretions (adrenalin, tears, sweat, etc.) nerve activity (tension, stomach tightening, headaches); temperature increases; heart beat increases; body movement; speech changes (stuttering, voice inflection, rapid talk); eye movement; etc.

3. Reading emotional behavior, or body changes caused by thoughts, is an important diagnostic skill for it is through such means that a counselor can get to the thoughts which produced the behavior.

4. If thoughts change, emotions will change.

5. Emotions, for the purposes of counseling, can be best put into two categories, positive and negative.

a.) Positive emotions include: attraction, joy, excitement, love, happiness, self-fulfillment, pleasure, ecstasy, satisfaction, etc.

b.) Negative emotions include: worry, guilt, anger, boredom, depression, sorrow, anxiety, hate, etc.

III. The concept of personal mastery.

A. The concept of personal mastery is an idealization based on learning principles: that person can be said to be personally masterful who functions at a level of mastery in every behavioral area.

B. Learning principles:

1. All behavior is learned.

2. All behavior is performed at some level of effectiveness. A convenient five-step ladder of performance useful to counselors is this:

a.) Panic behavior: the person in a state of panic is incapable of helping his or her self.

b.) Inertia behavior: better than panic, but no movement is occurring.

c.) Striving behavior: attempts, not necessarily leading anywhere, are being made; better than inertia.

d.) Coping behavior: the behavior is helping the owner to adjust, to "make it," to "hang in there," but there is room for improvement; better than striving, coping is behaving in ways that produce results.

e.) Mastery behavior: effective behavior in a given situation; sense of being in control, having options, on "top of things."

3. 95% of the population can learn any behavior.

4. The differences which occur between two people doing the learning is time and perseverance. The rate of learning equals the amount of time devoted and the amount of effort expended. People learn at different rates.

IV. Existential principles pertinent to PMC.

A. Existence (being in the present moment) precedes essence (that which makes a person what the person is; the sum of all one's life experience). We choose our essence because we choose our experiences. Living means choosing, from moment to moment. We create our essence.

B. Death is nothing. Living is all. In any given moment we can be more or less alive, something we decide.

C. Living to the fullest means to be engaged, as mentally, emotionally, and physically as individually possible, to have a vital relationship with one's environmental context, to be involved in one's surrounding reality in personally meaningful and productive ways.

D. Nothing matters more than anything else. In a world where one is existentially alone (a separate consciousness) one's on-going primary job becomes that of assigning meaning to one's choices and activities.

E. Freedom is a relative concept; one is more free when one has considered a greater number of options in any given present moment. Along with freedom comes responsibility: each person is responsible for the consequences of any behavior.

F. The most important personal task we have is to take care of ourselves, our welfare, our human condition. After us come all others like us, a species law.

V. Values. The PMC counselor is not without values. Without values, criteria for functioning are difficult to consistently establish. PMC values of high priority are these:

A. It is better to be alive than dead.

B. It is better to know more things than fewer things.

C. It is better to have determined the meaning of one's actions than to abdicate from doing so.

D. It is better to be able to do more things at a higher level of effectiveness than to do fewer things.

E. It is better to have chosen more positive emotions than negative ones.

F. It is better to love (accept and give to others) and to work (engage in productive activities) than to do neither of these.

G. It is better to live consciously in the present moment than consciously in past or future time.

H. It is better to be proactive than reactive.

I. It is better to care for one's physical body than to abuse or neglect it.

VI. Definition of counseling: an interpersonal helping procedure which includes these steps:

A. Client exploration for the purpose of identifying those thinking, feeling, or doing behaviors which are in any way self-defeating or require upgrading.

B. Identifying the self-defeating behaviors in the client's world and labeling them.

C. Providing insight to the client by examing these self-defeating behaviors to determine why they continue to persevere. This is done by posing a key question: "Let us look at what you get out of persisting in behaving in this way, what your pay-offs are?"

D. A decision to change thinking, feeling, and doing behavior based on dissatisfaction with identified pay-offs.

E. The identification of alternate behaviors to replace those which haven't worked well up to now for the client.

F. Setting goals to adopt behavioral alternatives.

G. Practicing the new behaviors in the counseling, if possible, through role-working structures.

H. Detailing the psychological homework to be done between sessions.

I. Following up (in later sessions) by getting client reports, evaluating the new behaviors, and revising goals, if appropriate.

VII. Group Counseling. Counseling in groups is still counseling, as defined above, since the group is comprised of individuals, each of whom has a life of his/her own outside the group and is in the group to work on positively changing behaviors which are non-productive in his/her world. Group counseling is distinguished by some additional special considerations:

A. The counseling focus continues to shift from client to client in an unprogrammed way. Members are always in competition for group time.

B. The group counselor must attend to more people simultaneously, thus dividing or sequentially ordering his or her attention, application of diagnostic skills, interventions, etc.

C. The group counselor has helpers in orchestrating the counseling process and can call on these resources.

D. More interpersonal behavior is elicited from clients in a group than in individual counseling as they act upon and respond to each other.

E. The resources for role-working and the opportunities to practice new behaviors are greatly enlarged.

F. Confidentiality is a greater concern as more people are relied upon to not break confidences.

G. Special knowledge, over and above individual counseling knowledge, is required for greater counselor effectiveness in groups: how people function in groups, special group structures, procedures, and strategies which can be invoked to advance the counseling of any member, leader interventions appropriate to counseling effectiveness in a group setting, etc.

9:45 - 10 a.m. Instructions for following activity. Training groups A and B established by counting off: "A, B, A, B, etc.," until all trainees are assigned to a group. Different methods of starting a counseling group are briefly introduced. The trainer's remarks to the trainees may go something like this:

> We are now divided into two groups in order that we can experience what it is like to be a group member client and to see how a typically effective first session might go. We (my co-trainer and I) will demonstrate two different methods of starting a group. There are

many opening structures which can be employed, but we consider the two which you will be shown to be the most effective and they are the ones we characteristically use. The first employs a method of group members introducing themselves without reference to their life roles, and the second makes use of sentence stems, but you will see both of these demonstrated, so I need not elaborate on them now. Later today, after both methods have been experienced, we will analyze, compare, and evaluate the two different opening structures, and introduce criteria by which to judge an effective opening.

For each member in Group A an observer member in Group B is assigned.

Then the trainer sets up the following activity and instructs the observers for their roles with some remarks such as what follows:

For our first demonstration of a method for the beginning session of a counseling group we will have a fishbowl, which is to say that Group A will sit in a small circle and Group B will sit in another circle closely surrounding Group A. Observers will sit on the opposite side of the group from their observees. For example, Mary, you are assigned to observe Mike in Group A. Therefore, after Mike positions himself in the inner circle, you will sit opposite him in the outer circle so that you can see his face and the front of his body clearly. Does everyone understand? Good. Now, what is it that the observer does? Certainly the observer will note all of the action that goes on in the group, but that is not his or her primary task. The observer's first concern is whatever behavior is going on in his or her observee. Observers will <u>study</u> their observees and look for and take note of everything that the observee says or does. Counselors need to develop their diagnostic skills and this is the observer's chance to practice doing so. I even encourage you to take notes for there will be much specific activity to observe and recall later. As observers you will be spectators, behavioral scientists, and will not be participating in the action. What does the observer look for? First, the observer notes all non-verbal behavior, body position, eye movement, hand and feet movement, and facial expressions. Second, all verbal behavior is noted, the way a person talks, to whom, when, whether the observee makes explanations, gives information or advice, asks questions, referees, or whatever. The effective behavioral investigator is always questioning and hypothesizing: What is going on in my observee right now? What is he thinking, what is he feeling? What I think he's thinking right now is...? What I think he's feeling right now is...?

On what evidence do I base my judgments? Why is my observee doing what he is? Defending self, showing he can contribute something of value to the group to gain approval or acceptance? In other words, the observer continually makes interpretations, too.

After the group session, observers and observees will be paired off for a time to give each other feedback. We will describe how to do that prior to the feedback time. Are there any questions?

Handout: "What Effective Group Counseling Is And 20 Underlying Assumptions."

Training materials discussed and their use specified.

10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Demonstration. Group A in fishbowl. First method of opening a group modeled. Once everyone is settled, all observers in their assigned place in the outer ring opposite their observees, the trainer says the following:

While it is true that we are in a training situation, this does not mean that this is not a real counseling group. All of you in this inner circle are participating in this counseling experience as clients, and each one of you have the opportunity to work on yourself and positively change some aspects of your behavior. Later we'll have time to analyze the process, so it would be inappropriate to ask questions during this group time that a student of group counseling might ask, though we'll be urging you to do so after the session. And though it may be somewhat disconcerting at first to ignore the people in Group B who are watching us, make an effort to do so. They won't be doing any participating, only we in the inner circle will do so. OK, let's get started. What I am going to say next are the opening remarks I would make to any group I would counsel. Later in the day we will discuss these remarks, the counselor's opening pitch to the group:

We are going to experience being counseled in a group setting. A counseling group is a helping group. What this means is that we are all here to help each other and to get help for ourselves. Our purpose is not to discuss issues, to socialize, or to have "rap" sessions about controversial topics, or to gripe about the way the

world is. A person does not have to be inadequate in any way to benefit from counseling. If a person can admit that he or she can grow in some way, then that person can benefit, which is to say that anyone on this planet could profit from an experience in a counseling group. Why do people join counseling groups? For many reasons: some want to work on eliminating negative feelings, such as worry, anger, guilt, sorrow; some want to work on improving important relationships in their lives; some feel they are drifting and want to formulate more definite plans for the future, to have more directionality in their lives; some want to work at losing weight; some want to become less shy, more initiating in encounters with others; some want to work at becoming more lively and humorous in their dealings with others; some want to work on managing time or money more effectively; some want to eliminate approval-seeking behavior or getting over their fears of rejection or handling their moments better when they are alone, so they don't feel lonely...The list is endless. These are only a few of all the possible reasons.

In this process of getting counseling help, my co-counselor, Tom (or whatever name), and I are different from all of you. We are trained counselors and our job is to deliver a counseling service to each of you, our clients. As your counselors, we cannot use any of the group time to help ourselves (if we wanted such help we would have to join a group as clients.) Therefore, if any of our actions seem in any way to be self-serving, "call us" on them and we will share our rationale for our behavior with you.

What is your job in the group? To get as much help for yourself as you can. Of course, you will be in competition for group time, for counseling focus, with everyone else in the group, but Tom and I will try to see that everyone who wants some time gets it, over the life of the group. When you are ready, we assume that you will make use of the counseling: no one will pressure you, only encourage you. And you are asked to freely engage in helping each other, in providing your feedback, your knowledge, sharing your skills.

Since the process of sharing aspects of your personal life outside the group with everyone here is important (for we are all interested in acquiring new behaviors, in changing ourselves in self-enhancing ways, to lead our lives more productively and effectively in our personal worlds outside of this group, the goal of all counseling), it is vital that we discuss confidentiality. What this means is that we will not discuss what goes on in this group with anyone else who is not a part of this experience. This doesn't mean you could not

> confide in a good friend or family member about what it is you are personally working on, what your counseling goals are. What it does mean is that you will not discuss what is going on with any other members of the group, or what events occurred in the group. What goes on here belongs to us, and no one outside of this room. Is there anyone who feels he or she cannot hold to that request? (If there are questions about confidentiality, they are handled at this point.) Good! It is very important to each person here to know that whatever he or she says or does will be held in strict confidence.
>
> Tom, have I left anything out? Do you have anything to add?

The role of the co-counselor, while the opening pitch is being delivered, is to attend to the pitch and to the group members, to see how they are taking it all in, whether or not some individuals appear confused. When invited to add to the opening pitch, then, the co-counselor does so, perhaps adding or clarifying certain points. The co-counselor invites questions about the content of the opening pitch. Should any of the questions be related to learning about how to be a group counselor, these are not answered but deferred to a later time in the workshop when they will be discussed. When all business surrounding the opening pitch is dispensed with, the first counselor continues and introduces the first method of opening a group:

> OK. Let's get started. Since we hardly know each other and we will be working so closely together to help each other, it's important that we find out who we are, what we are like. Tom and I are going to ask each of you to describe yourself, but to do this without reference to any roles. Essentially we're asking you to answer the question "Whom am I?" For some of you this will be difficult, because you are being asked to describe yourself not by saying what you do for a living, whether or not

you're married, what your hobbies are, what your age is, your vocational plans, whether you're in school or not, your family data,to give none of the usual information people generally ask for in our society when they meet at parties or wherever. We want to hear what kind of a person you are, how you're different from most folks, what is characteristic of you.

Some of you may find this kind of an introduction of yourself difficult, since you have never talked about yourself in this way before. If that's the case, don't be alarmed or feel pressured, as Tom and I will ask you questions to help draw you out, and we encourage all of you to participate in this drawing-out process, if any member of the group appears to be stuck. Now, I'm going to ask Tom to introduce himself so that everyone has an idea of what we're asking each of you to do. Tom?

At this point Tom models the task by introducing himself in some such manner as the following:

My name is Tom. Probably the single most important factor about me is that I see life as an adventure, all of the time. This is to say that I enjoy discovering the unknown and look forward to whatever is happening next, even making a practice of getting into new places and meeting new people whenever I can. I'm very sociable and very interested in people, accepting them as they are, not wanting them to be different for my sake. I believe in working hard and playing hard, though I'm not a workaholic. I'm not where I would like to be when it comes to managing my time and money efficiently, and I'm working at getting better in these areas. Also, I have trouble saying no to certain people in my world, and I'm working at changing that. Frequently I procastinate and I don't like that, but that goes along with managing my time better. I'm athletic and believe in taking good care of my physical self. I'm creative, have a great sense of humor, and I'm good at being a fun person. I don't complain, and that's important about me, as I tend to avoid complainers, too. I love people, animals, and nature. It's extremely important to me to have some

solitude in every day. Well, those are some things which partly tell what I'm all about.

The first counselor then says: "OK. That gives us an idea about how to proceed. Now, whenever you're ready, tell us about yourself." If too long a period (a minute or so) goes by and no one volunteers, the counselor would gently call on someone who appears ready in order to get the process started. The group session proceeds and continues until the allotted time period is used up. If, at that time, not all group members have introduced themselves, the counselor ends the session by saying: "We must stop now. Some of you have not yet had a chance to tell us who you are, but you'll get your opportunity to do so when group A reconvenes this afternoon."

11:00 - 11:15 a.m. Dyad activity. Instructions: The first counselor trainer says: "Now it is time for the observer pairs to get together. Partners may go anywhere on the premises and the observer will provide feedback to the observee. Discuss the behavior you witnessed and check out your hypotheses about the feelings and thoughts which you thought were going on in your observee. We will reconvene here for the second demonstration of a group opening in fifteen minutes." (During this activity both trainers visit observer pairs to facilitate their interaction.)

11:15 - 12:00 a.m. Demonstration. Group B in fishbowl. Same as first method of how to start a group, only with a second demonstration method. Once all members of Group B are in their inner circle and Group A observers are arranged in the outer circle with observers situated opposite their observees, the first counselor says: "Group A members have had their first counseling session and now Group B members will have their first counseling session. Since all of you in Group B have heard the initial remarks I made to Group A about the role of members and that of Tom and myself, I'm not going to repeat these. Let's assume that I have just made those same remarks to you. Does any one have any questions?" (If questions are asked, they are responded to at this point.) "Is there anyone in the group who cannot commit herself or himself to the idea of confidentiality?" (If anyone speaks up, that person is attended to.) "Good. Now let's get started." The first counselor now introduces a second method of opening a group counseling experience with remarks similar to the following:

> We saw the members of Group A introduce themselves in a certain way. We are going to introduce ourselves in a slightly different way. What we're asking each member to do is to complete the following two sentence stems: "The important thing that nobody or few people understands about me is..." and "the thing I'd most like to change about myself is..." (Here the counselor repeats both stems.) Think about these two things for a minute, and whenever you're ready, let us hear from you.

Thus, the group begins. If there are questions they are answered. If confusion exists, the counselor can ask his co-counselor to model an example of what someone might say. The group session then proceeds and continues until the allotted time is consumed. If, at that time, all members have not had the opportunity to complete their sentence-stem introductions, the counselor ends the session by saying: "We must stop now. Those of you who have not told us what you'd most like to change about yourselves and what most people don't understand about you will have the opportunity to do so this afternoon."

12:00 - 12:15 p.m. Dyad activity. Instructions: The chief trainer now says: "OK. The observer pairs will get together again, just as we did earlier, only with your roles reversed. At 12:15 end your session and report to (whatever specific instructions apply) for lunch. We will reconvene in this room at 1:15 after lunch. (During this activity both trainers visit observer pairs to facilitate feedback of observers to observees.)

12:15 - 1:15 p.m. Lunchbreak.

1:15 - 1:45 p.m. Discussion and lecture. Comparison of the two methods of opening a group. Sample discussion questions: 1.) What did you observe the leaders do? 2.) Which method did you think was the most

effective and why? 3.) What didn't you like about either opening structure? 4.) How do you think either method would work with a teen-age or young adult group? When some discussion about the two methods has ensued, the trainer then states the criteria for an effective beginning for a counseling group.

The group counselor has her or his goals for an initial counseling session and these are embodied in the criteria against which to judge whether the group is launched effectively or not:

1.) Everyone in the group is given the opportunity to speak about him/herself. (Rationale: verbal activity reduces pressure and resistance; more behavior is manifested, which allows the counselor(s) to make initial diagnoses and allows the group members to get "to know each other," thus reducing feelings related to being apprehensive about strangers.)

2.) In a balanced introduction counseling data is brought out. In drawing out members the counselor(s) are actively involved in Step One of the counseling process, exploring for places where counseling can productively focus with each member.

3.) Assessments are being made by the counselor(s) to determine what resources-for-helping others exist in the members.

4.) Some counseling takes place. Before the first session ends the counselor(s) actually engage in counseling one or more members to foreshadow for all that this kind of help is available here and that this is how the group will spend its time.

5.) A meaningful, purposeful experience is provided. The first session lays the groundwork for what is to come.

6.) Members are helped to interact. This, too, "breaks the ice," and it allows the counselor(s) to assess interpersonal communications skills of members. Traineesare referred to Counseling Techniques That Work (Chap. 10) for additional group starting structures.

1:45 - 2:15 p.m. Discussion and lecture. Criteria for the selection of group members.

Sample discussion questions:

1.) If you could select anyone you wanted to be in your counseling group, whom would you pick?

2.) What criteria would you use to guide your choices?

3.) Would you put persons in the group who did not volunteer?

4.) Would you put persons in the group who didn't want to be there?

5.) How would you "advertise" the group counseling experience?

6.) On what basis would you exclude anyone?

Following a short discussion elicited by such questions and others like it, the trainer provides guidelines for group member selection which includes the following points.

1.) Counseling groups can be effectively conducted with any randomly selected population and the concept of selection is an ideal: all things being equal it is better to select members than not.

2.) Given ideal conditions where the counselor can pick and choose the following criteria are helpful:

A.) Try to have a balanced group when it comes to sex, ethnicity, abilities, background life experiences etc. (except for age; groups are more helpful to one another when they are more closely in the same peer group). More balance means having more resources for help.

B.) Heterogenity (mixture) of membership is important. Homogeneity (a group of all habituated hard drug

users, for example) in a given negative behavioral variable tends to load the group in favor of low counseling productivity.

C.) The inexperienced group counselor would select individuals who could profit more from the experience because they have more rather than less self-control, are more committed to self-development, are self-starters. This is to "build-in success." For the inexperienced beginner without highly developed group counseling skills, more difficult potential members are passed over in favor of those with a desire to improve themselves.

D.) Building-in success also means preparing members for the group counseling experience so that they will use it to their best advantage. This is best done through an "intake" interview wherein the counselor:

a.) Explores with the potential member what he/she might work on in the group.

b.) Informs the person of what he/she might expect, what the experience will be like, how he/she can use the experience.

c.) Elicits a commitment from the member to work on particular self-behavior areas in the group.

(Trainees are referred to Merle Ohlsen's "Readiness for Membership in a Counseling Group," in J. Vriend and W. W. Dyer, Counseling Effectively in Groups, for further reading.)

2:15 - 3:30 p.m. Group counseling participation. Group A in fishbowl co-led by trainers. This structure is a repeat of that which was instituted in the morning (10:00 - 11:00). Prior to opening Group A's second counseling session the chief trainer tells all enrollees: "Both groups will receive a second hour of counseling wherein Tom and I will be modeling effective group counselor behaviors so that you can both see and experience how the group continues its sessions. Later we will analyze this experience and discuss group counseling process variables. Now we will be counseling the members of Group A, so we are asking all Group B members to observe your partners in Group A and the group counseling process. Please take notes. Tom, would you like to open the group?"

The co-counselor then makes opening remarks to Group A to begin the counseling session. He summarizes what happened

in Group A's morning session, being particularly mindful to point out events corresponding to the criteria for an effective group beginning (see above). If Group A has not completed its introductions of members, Tom reminds the group who has and has not been heard from. If all members have previously introduced themselves, Tom concludes his summary with some remarks such as these:

> As we listened to each person talk about himself or herself this morning it was obvious to all of us that each person in the group has areas in his or her personal world that he or she would like to upgrade or change. For example, Mary, you spoke of the difficulty you are having in finding more interesting people to interact and do things with, how you feel you're at a crossroads in your life, bored with what's going on now, but unsure of where to go next. Eric, you talked of your temper, how it flares up at times and you don't know how to control it, not liking that in yourself. Each of us have referred to one or more behaviors which aren't helping us in any way that we'd like to work on changing. If anyone of you would like to use the group right now, please jump in.

If the morning session ended with someone being focused on, someone being counseled, Tom's concluding opening remarks would take this form:

> Mary, when the group ended this morning you were working on your situation, telling us about your dissatisfaction with where you are in your world, how you're looking for new directions but feeling scared. You got reactions from various members. Why don't you tell us about your thoughts and feelings you've had since this morning related to that experience, give us a report, and then, perhaps, we can pick it up where we left off.

When the time is up, one of the co-counselors concludes session two by announcing:

> This is the end of your second group session, but tomorrow you will be spending a great deal more time in the group, so each of you will have plenty of opportunity to use the group to work on your concerns. Now, we are asking you to switch places with the members of Group B.

3:30 - 4:45 p.m. Group counseling participation. Group B in fishbowl arrangement. One of the co-counselors opens the group with remarks similar to those detailed immediately above, as appropriate to Group B's progress and development in the morning session (11:15 - 12:00).

4:45 - 5:15 p.m. Process analysis discussion. Observer instructions. The chief trainer first of all reminds the observers to give diagnostic feedback to observees: "...but we're asking you to do this on your own time, after we're through for the day or early tomorrow morning." Then the chief trainer initiates the group process analysis discussion, first by calling on observers to give their reactions to what they observed when they sat outside the group, then going to the members of the group for reactions, observations, questions, or comments. Sample discussion questions:

1.) What did you see the leaders do that you thought was particularly effective?

2.) What did they do that you thought was ineffective or even harmful?

3.) What did you see them do that you didn't understand?

4.) Who received specific counseling help and what was the nature of that help?

5.) Remember the steps involved in the counseling process that we discussed this morning? What are some illustrations of these which took place in either group?

6.) What strong feelings occurred in any member at any time?

7.) Were any members helped to set behavioral goals?

8.) How did the leaders go about using other group members to help the member receiving the counseling focus?

9.) Did you see any instance of the leaders employing a special group structure?

10.) How well did the co-leaders work together? Did you spot anything which might indicate they were

working at cross-purposes? If so, how did that get resolved?

11.) As a group member, what did you get out of the experience?

Following the discussion, each of the leaders briefly summarizes and points to particular process variables which were not previously touched upon.

5:15 - 5:30 p.m. Day one wrap-up. Recapitulation of day's happenings. Instructions for overnight study, as appropriate. Tomorrow's activities briefly previewed.

DAY TWO

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Lecturette. Summarization of Day-One learnings. The chief trainer reminds the trainees of the conceptual territory which was covered on Day-One, helping each to more solidly formulate his or her cognitive map, with an expansion of these remarks:

> Ultimately our goal is to work with youth and young adults in groups, and what you are receiving in this workshop is a counseling model for doing so, a Personal Mastery Counseling model. Yesterday, we gave you the theoretical background for personal mastery counseling, a host of totally essential concepts which undergird the process of helping any human being to become more fully-functioning, more personally masterful. We saw how an effective

counselor functions in a one-on-one setting, what the counseling process is, how it can be operationally described in a series of steps. Next, we saw how these crucial steps also take place in a group, because a group is composed of individuals seeking to improve themselves, each striving to become more personally masterful in her or his world, and the concept of the group as an entity having its goals does not exist. A counseling group is not a team, a committee, a jury, nor a political body. We saw how there are particular advantages to helping persons in groups, rather than on a one-to-one basis. Then we got involved with group membership ourselves, to experience what it's like to be a client and to see with our eyes how counselors function in a group, what interventions they make, when they make them, and for what ends. Tom and I modeled a number of these for you, and this part of the workshop is based on the learning principle that humans learn by imitating. But the learning is increased if you do it yourself, and in a short time this morning you will have your opportunity to practice leading your group.

What else did we model yesterday? These things: the counselor's opening pitch to a group and two particular methods of getting a group started. Later we analyzed these and saw how there are important criteria for judging the effectiveness of a group opening. Later we discussed principles of selecting members into a group. The groups continued into a second session and we analyzed the counseling process afterwards, noting in particular why the leaders did what they did in specific instances. Beyond all this, everyone in the workshop had the opportunity to practice observing and diagnosing the specific behavior of a subject, a particularly difficult and vital counselor skill.

Now, we want to return your attention to one of the most crucial steps in the counseling process, mentioned only briefly yesterday, goal-setting.

Lecturette. Discussion of steps in goal-setting. The chief trainer introduces these with commentary such as the following:

Most of us have heard about setting goals to the point where we think we know all about them. We've heard about short-range, intermediate, and long-range goals. A goal is a goal. You set it and strive to attain it, and that's all that can be said about the subject. It's simple!

Well, to a counselor who is determined to be effective, it is not all that simple. The counselor's job is to help a client to set goals, and since each of you will be taking a hand at counseling group members today we'd like to give you a breakdown of what determines whether not a client has been helped to settle on an appropriate goal, one appropriate for that client.

Here the trainer launches into a lecturette on the criteria for effective goal-setting.

A goal (statement of a future acquisition of new behavior) is effectively set when:

1.) It is mutually arrived at. The counselor does not set the goal for the client, but helps the client to arrive at the goal. The client must desire the objective, be committed to it, see its relevance and how it will be beneficial.

2.) It is specific. Specificity means that the new behavior will occur in a particular place at a particular time. Who and what are in the picture at the time and place when the new behavior is practiced ought to be named as a part of goal-setting.

3.) It is pertinent. Pertinency refers to the appropriateness

of this particular new behavior acquisition for this client, how it is related to the broader picture of self-development.

4.) It is attainable. Frequently goals are ineffectively set because they haven't been thought through and made realistic.

5.) It is measurable. Any behavior can be quantified. If a goal cannot, it needs reshaping into behavioral terms.

6.) It is observable. This is to say that mental behavior gets translated into action which others can see.

7.) It is repeat-backable. If the client cannot put the goal into his/her own words to the satisfaction of the counselor, then, it is not clearly understood by the client, and therefore hardly accomplishable.

Hand-out. A copy of Dyer and Vriend's article, "A Goal-setting Checklist for Counselors," is here distributed to all trainees for their later study.

9:00 - 9:30 a.m. Trainee co-leader teams assigned and instructed. Five more counseling sessions for Groups A and B, each session lasting fifty minutes, take up most of the remainder of this day. (This workshop model is based on a population of twenty trainees, ten per group. Should the actual population be greater or lesser, then the time when each pair of trainees

is receiving practice in co-leading the group is expanded or contracted to fit into the five-hour time-block herein scheduled. Thus, if Groups A and B contained twelve members each, co-leaders would have only forty minutes to practice their group counseling leadership skills instead of fifty.)

First, the trainers assign partner teams within each group, five teams of co-leaders for each group. This is best done randomly, having members count off 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 twice. Thus, Group A has five teams: A_1, A_2, A_3, and so on. Second, Groups A and B are assigned to meet at separate locations (no more fishbowl arrangements), and all members of each group instructed where to meet.

Then the chief trainer instructs the entire workshop in some such way as this:

> For most of the remainder of this day, you will be meeting in your counseling groups. Each of you will have the opportunity to practice co-leading your group with the partner we have just assigned to you. Your group has had two sessions. Five more are scheduled. As a client-member of the group you may want to keep the time factor in mind. It will help you to decide when you want to use the group to work on your concerns. Each one of the five sessions will last fifty minutes, and each pair of co-leaders will get ten minutes of feedback from your group members and from Tom and I about your performance as leaders.

Let me urge each of you not to be apprehensive about how you perform as leaders. You are not being evaluated or graded. Notice I said feedback a moment ago. Tom and I will react to your performance, as will your fellow group members. We will only make comments; then it is up to you to evaluate. There is no expectation that your performance will be that of an expert or even up to some mythical minimal standard. You are beginners, trying to lead a group for the first time.

Here's the way the sessions will proceed: Tom and I will take five minutes or so to instruct each pair of co-leaders. Then they will enter the group and get it going. When the group time is used up for that session, the co-leaders will announce it. Then the two co-leaders will receive the focus of the group members and from Tom or myself for ten minutes on their behaviors as leaders. During these ten minutes we are asking the leaders to remain silent, to drink-in all they can. They will not have anything to say. There is no need for nor time for explanations or defenses. During part of that same time Tom and I will instruct the next pairs (Group A and B) of leaders. Are there any questions about procedure? Good. Now report to your group room and wait for your leaders to join you to begin your next session. Will co-leader Teams A_1 and B_1 please meet with Tom and me in the hall.

When all questions about procedures have been answered, the trainers meet with the first two pairs of co-leaders and give them instructions which include the following points:

Instructions to co-leader trainees.

1. Sit across from one another. This is so each one of you can see each half of the group, what is going on in each member. Also, it enables you to see each other clearly.

2. Don't be afraid to communicate aloud with each other across the group, to share your thinking about what it is you're doing, to question each other. You then become models of openness for the members.

3. One of you take responsibility for opening the group. That leader becomes the provider of a link to what has gone on before and what will now go on. The leader who opens announces the time of the session, when it will end.

4. The other leader takes responsibility for closing the group. Three minutes or so before the time is up, that leader says, "We only have about three more minutes of group time left." When time is up, that leader reminds the group that the next ten minutes will be feedback time to the leaders and that they won't be saying anything, just listening and absorbing the feedback.

5. Have a plan. The most obvious plan is to continue with whatever was going on when the last session ended. But what happens next? Remember that you are <u>counseling individuals,</u> so think about

each member, what that member has revealed about himself or herself, what concerns, difficulties, particulars came out. Decide with whom you can go to work to provide counseling help. Encourage members to use the group time, but if no one takes advantage of your invitation, decide on which member you will turn to.

6. Remember the steps of counseling. When you are working with a person, decide where you are in the counseling process: exploring, providing insight, coming up with alternate behavioral choices, and so on. Try to help your client get to the point of goal-setting, making a commitment to take action in a particular context. See if you can't get members to set goals which are attainable today, in the group, at lunchtime, or sometime before the day ends.

7. OK. Now take some time out to confer with your co-leader and discuss who will do what. Talk to each other about each person in the group and how you can provide counseling help for each. Formulate your plan. Remember a plan is only a plan, not a rigid structure. Don't fall in love with your plan: have alternate ways to go and give members plenty of space to use the group in their

own way. You're not sure what is going to come up. Do you have again questions? OK, then have your conference. Then go and meet your group. Tom and I will be coming in and out to observe, but we won't be entering the group nor interfering with whatever is going on unless you get stuck and want to use us as consultants at a certain point.

Role of the trainers while the groups are in session. While the groups are being co-led by trainees, the trainers become roving observers and consultants. They take notes and share their observations about leader performance with the trainee co-leaders at the time scheduled.

9:30 - 10:20 a.m. Group A and B in session, co-led by trainee teams A_1, and B_1.

10:20 - 10:30 a.m. Feedback to leaders. The counseling session ends. Leaders remain silent. Trainers provide feedback first. Then teams A_2 and B_2 are taken out for instructions, while the group members provide their feedback to the trainee co-leaders, A_1 and B_1. Teams A_2 and B_2 are given the same instructions as detailed above.

10:30 - 11:20 a.m. Groups A and B in session, co-led by trainee teams A_2 and B_2. Trainers serve as roving observers and consultants.

11:20 - 11:30 a.m. Feedback to leaders. Trainee teams A_3 and B_3 receive instructions.

11:30 - 12:20 p.m. Groups A and B in session, co-led by trainee teams A_3 and B_3. Trainers serve as roving observers and consultants.

12:20 - 12:30 p.m. Feedback to leaders.

12:30 - 1:30 p.m. Lunch break. Co-leader teams A_4 and B_4 are instructed to meet with trainers at 1:20 for their instructions. All others are told to report to their group session room at 1:30.

1:20 - 1:30 p.m. Trainers meet with co-leader teams A_4 and B_4. Instructions given to leaders. Leaders are reminded that this is the next to last session, and encouraged to help members of the group who have not yet taken advantage of the group time.

1:30 - 2:20 p.m. Groups A and B in session, co-led by trainee teams A_4 and B_4. Trainers serve as roving consultants and observers.

2:20 - 2:30 p.m. Feedback to leaders. Trainee teams A_5 and B_5 receive instructions. In addition to the instructions provided to all other trainee leaders, this last team is told to:

1.) Remind all members that only so many minutes of counseling time remain in this final session, and this is the last opportunity any client member has to use the group.

2.) Take the final ten minutes or so for members to declare goals they intend to achieve in their own worlds after the group ends, goals which have grown out of their experiences in the counseling group as clients (not goals to use the workshop

learnings in their professional roles). Leaders will need to apportion time so that each and every client is heard from in this segment of the last session.

3.) Inform the group that they are to report to the large meeting room after the feedback to leaders has occurred for the last hour of the workshop.

2:30 - 3:20 p.m. Groups A and B in final session, co-led by trainee teams A_5 and B_5. Trainers serve as roving observers and consultants.

3:20 - 3:30 p.m. Feedback to leaders.

3:30 - 3:45 p.m. Response to trainees: discussion. What has happened up to now is vented and dealt with. All questions responded to within this fifteen minute time segment. Sample discussion questions not needed. If less than fifteen minutes are consumed, trainers go into final lecture.

3:45 - 4:00 p.m. Final lecture. This lecture, delivered by either or both (preferably the latter) of the trainers, includes the following points:

1.) Brief summarization of workshop learnings.

2.) An appreciation for how involved the trainees were in their learning experience, including how they made good use of their experiences as clients. Here it is unimportant to cite a few outstanding examples. The rationale for this is not to "butter-up" the trainees, but to remind them that the process works, and they have empirical evidence of same.

3.) How complicated the process of effective group leading is, but not fearful. How rewarding it is, how people benefit from it. Again, cite brief examples.

4.) Given its complexity and the skills needed, encourage the trainees to "build-in success" in their earlier efforts by choosing those subjects with the highest potential for self-development.

5.) Further, encourage them to co-lead groups, in the beginning especially, to share their responsibility and have a colleague with whom to confer, plan, and receive feedback.

6.) Encourage the trainees to attend every training experience in groupwork which might be available to them. One cannot learn too much about leading groups.

7.) Suggest further readings about personal mastering counseling in groups (see Bibliography) and encourage them to read, nay study the entire book, Counseling Techniques That Work, and the other workshop hand-outs. Finally, hand out "Brief Answers to Twenty Questions About Group Counseling I Am Most Often Asked."

4:00 - 4:30 p.m. Evaluation Activity. All trainees write out narrative reactions to workshop experience in response to guidelines prompter sheet. Trainers avilable for one-on-one reactions.

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APPENDIX A

HANDOUT, WORKSHOP DAY ONE, 9:45 A.M.

WHAT EFFECTIVE GROUP COUNSELING IS AND TWENTY UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS *

Group counseling is a helping procedure that begins with the group members exploring their own worlds for the purpose of identifying thinking, feeling, and doing processes which are in any way self-defeating. Members determine and declare to the group what their counter-productive behaviors are and make decisions about which ones they can commit themselves to work on. The group counselor helps each member set individual goals related to the replacement of undesirable thinking and behavior with more positive thinking and behaving. The counselor helps the individual members to identify significant associations, relationships, situations, self-logic, and self-performance in their current lives in which thinking, feeling, and doing are evidently self-defeating. Then the counselor helps move each individual toward self-understanding by examining why such self-crippling behavior persists and what the psychological maintenance system for such behavior is. This means fully answering to each counselee's satisfaction a key question: what are the positive and negative results of perpetuating the behavior which chains the client to self-defeating conduct? The counselor (or any group member acting as a helper) then moves the individual to explore ways of breaking the chain and to seek possible alternatives to self-defeating thinking, feeling, or doing. The next step in the process involves setting goals which are specific and realistically attainable for the individual member or additional members who share a like concern. After goal-setting, the individual tests proposed alternate behaviors in the group where genuine helping interventions, structures, activities, or simulations are provided. Psychological homework assignments are then mutually initiated and the member tries the new behavior in his or her personal world, outside the group, where it truly counts. In subsequent sessions, the member reports on new thinking, new feelings engendered by the new thinking, new behaviors, and follow-up behavioral goals which are established as a result of analysis and evaluation in the group. Such reports go on throughout the life of the group. The individual then either incorporates the new thinking and behavior or rejects them or gets recycled back for additional exploration, self-understanding, and goal-setting. The total emphasis is on the acquisition and incorporation of productive new behaviors into the self-system.

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* Taken from Counseling Techniques That Work by Wayne W. Dyer and John Vriend, New York, Funk & Wagnalls , pp. 131- 140.

1. Each individual is more important than the collective.
2. The leader is not a member of the group.
3. Group counseling is for everyone.
4. A counseling group has no group goals.
5. Counseling individuals in groups is not only permitted: it is necessary.
6. Group interaction is not a goal unto itself.
7. The counselor does not seek to heighten natural pressures inherent in a group.
8. A counseling group is not a confessional.
9. Gripe sessions, focusing on outsiders, having conversations, and focusing on topics constitute inappropriate group counseling content.
10. What goes on in a counseling group is privileged communication.
11. Group members speak for themselves in a counseling group.
12. Feelings are not emphasized over thoughts in counseling groups.
13. Group cohesiveness is not a group counseling goal.
14. Session-to-session follow-up is an integral part of group counseling.
15. In every group counseling session, one or more members receive specific counseling help.
16. In group counseling there is no positive correlation between member comfort and effectiveness.
17. Negative emotions are neither bad nor avoided in group counseling.
18. There is no agenda in group counseling.
19. All behavior in counseling groups is neutral; it is neither "good" nor "bad."
20. Effectiveness in group counseling is measured by what goes on outside the group.

BRIEF ANSWERS TO TWENTY QUESTIONS ABOUT GROUP COUNSELING I AM MOST OFTEN ASKED

John Vriend

The following list of twenty questions and answers appear in no sequential order, nor are they exhaustive of all the productive or insightful questions that could be or ought to be posed about counseling in groups. They are merely the ones which I have received over and over, and which make realistic sense to me to ask. My answers are brief but not off-handed. In plain language I have tried to state the essentials of each case as I know it, as each has grown out of my experience. As a group counselor, particularly in the early stages, I sought answers to most of the same questions, and the workable answers evolved out of my own experience. Indeed, an answer not operationalized was no answer at all, regardless of the source: it was only a hypothesis, a proposal for action.

Each answer could be expanded to become an essay in itself, and, in some cases, have been. I refer to no research support for my answers, not because there is none nor because they are untestable by behavioral science methodology. They are testable and research support exists. I simply find it unnecessary to link my answers to research in order to make them more credible, more worthy of belief. The committed counselor or beginner looking for answers will not prize a link to research authority for its own sake and that person will award plausibility to each response I make based on the "goodness of fit" it makes when measured against her or his own experience. But enough. On to the questions themselves.

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1. What is the best size for a group?

This question is as old as counseling and therapy groups are. Beginners ask it. It is a criterion against which to test the self-acclaimed groupworker. If you have experimented, you quit asking. I've counseled groups of every number up to 23. The producers of the early group counseling literature suggest sizes of six to eight, and the uninformed repeat the formula. When I hear this, today, I regard it as an opinion coming from sheer inexperience. I don't like to counsel in a group smaller than eight, nor bigger than twelve. Eight to twelve is the ideal range. The size question is easily resolved, if one thinks about the nature of experience in groups. The principle is this: if a group is small, there is a giant pressure on all members to contribute: it is very difficult to be in a shrunken-size group and not talk: your freedom not to talk is impinged upon. If a group is large, over twelve, there is a pressure on the members not to participate. In a large classroom the questioner risks the disapprobation of the other class members who are each impatient with anyone else's personal quest or agenda. At a Billy Graham rally, who wants to stand up and take on the speaker with a personal concern? Size is a matter of importance in group counseling. If a group goes for ten sessions, let's say for two hours each session, it is obvious that some individuals will get less focus-on-themselves-time than others. Make the number too large and the experience gets watered down for too many. Make the group too small, and some will get more time than they bargained for. Ten is a round, workable number, if all show up for each session.

I ought to state, however, that the consumate group counselor will and can work with any number. If I have fifty, I create a group of ten and let the others watch in a ring around the ten. If there's time, I do this fishbowl five times, parceling out the time to each "in"

group, assigning observers to each member of the counseling group from the "out" group, four to one, thereby involving all present. If I have a group of 15, as I've had many times, I proceed as though it is a regular counseling group. Some members come forward, use the group, and others hang back. I don't judge the "rightness or wrongness" of this, of who uses the group focus and counseling time and who doesn't. Some will; some won't. These individuals live with what they did or did not do. As the counselor, I simply serve. I don't pass judgment. I don't compare.

2. How long ought a group to run?

This is a two-part question referring to both the length of each session and the total number of sessions. The length of a session, particularly in some institutional settings, is frequently determined by constraints, the press of other scheduled activities. In a school setting, for example, counselors must work within a schedule of class periods of rather short, under an hour, duration. Given the nature of a group counseling session, the times devoted both to starting and to ending a session effectively, it seems a handicap to cut off a session in anything under an hour and a half. If this is necessary, then the frequency of sessions ought to be increased, a group meeting for forty-five minutes three times a week in lieu of once a week, for example. The ideal time interval for a session, in my experience, has been for a minimum of two hours and a maximum of three. This allows for the counseling focus to get around to everyone who requires some of the group time. If the group meets once a week (though the interval can be increased with little loss of productivity), this allows for the members to practice their new behaviors, the goals set in the group, in their outside worlds between sessions; meeting more than once a week cuts down on such opportunities.

Regarding the session time, let it be said that each session ought to be for the same amount of time and that this be a fixed interval. Beginning group counselors, in particular, frequently let a session run overtime because what was going on "was so important." This is poppycock. It teaches some members that they needn't work within the time they have, but this goes against what happens in their outside-worlds for which they are being trained: "Time and tide waits for no man." Also, some members become disgruntled and build up their hostility; within themselves they're asking, "Why should I have to stay here because Gladys wants more feedback?" or some such question. They know that if it's important, Gladys can get back to it at the next session.

To convene a group that will run for fewer than ten sessions, I have found, is to program learnings for the members which are much less than what they could receive. For many, if not most, of the individuals who seek counseling in a group or have it mandated for them, it takes time for them to observe and test the process, see how it works, and how they can adapt it to their own uses. This "wait and see" behavior ought hardly to be interpreted by the counselor as resistance. It is simply scientific, a hypothesis-testing time, productive behavior for anyone. Ten to fifteen sessions is ideal; beyond the latter number the potency of the learnings per member diminishes. Beyond the life of the original schedule, it is effective to have one-shot follow-up sessions, quarterly, or semi-annually. Having established after-the-group goals for themselves, participants relish the down-the-road opportunity to report their progress in becoming more personally masterful.

3. How do you go about selecting people into a group?

Today, as a result of my experience I am willing without any preparation, particularly if

they are adults, to work with any random collection of people in a counseling group, though I hardly see this as ideal. Ideally I would want to screen applicants and prepare them for the experience ahead of time. I would not be looking for factors on which to "screen out" people so much as factors on which to "screen them in." I would look for 1.) their potential for the most amount of personal growth; 2.) their commitment to growing; and 3.) what resources they would bring to others in the group. I would try to get a capsule picture of where they are in their lives, what characteristic self-defeating behaviors they have, how frequently they experience any sort of negative emotions, what the quality of their relationships with significant others is in each case, and more. Functional intelligence or communication skills I would note but not use as criteria for inclusion. I would pursue what their former counseling experiences had been and what their expectations for the group experience were. Then I would prepare them for the experience in the same intake interview, first by correcting any distortions in their expectations, and second, by helping them to specify, define, and be committed to areas of their lives where changed behavior, new learnings that they could acquire in the group, were fervently desired.

One thing I have learned not to do, though a great deal of mythological claptrap in the groupwork literature yet extolls the practice, is to form a group made up of individuals with common problems. Aside from the benefits that accrue in a heterogeneous group due to the variety of behavioral resources that unlike individuals are able to provide for one another, the likelihood is minimized that no one but the counselor will be able to model at mastery levels the desired new behavior which works effectively when substituted for the problematic behavior. A groupful of losers tend to be of little help to one another and the work of the counselor in such a group requires a very long suit of experience.

variety and range, openness, behavioral areas to bring out that make for productive use of counseling help, these and more are modeled by the counselor. Many are noted in the counselor's opening statements. Many are focused on when an event occurs in the group. For example, the effective counselor takes the time to help other members understand that there will be no call on them to follow suit, after one member reveals a particularly tender and troublesome life concern and weeps agonizingly when it is being put forth, even though it was perfectly appropriate for that member to use the group in such a fashion. The counselor accepts every concern equally and helps each member with whatever that person chooses to work on. One person, working through the difficult decision to get a divorce, for instance, has no more status with the counselor than another person whose desire is to lose weight or eliminate servile headnodding.

The question of norms could be switched to be one of rules: What rules does a counseling group abide by? There are some. Attendance, the time given to each session, commitment to confidentiality, what is counseling material (conversations, discussions of "topics" are inappropriate), whether smoking will be permitted, are a few. But the fewer, the better.

6. Are there no goals for the group as a group?

A counseling group, unlike a committee, a jury, or an athletic team, exists only for the sake of the individuals who comprise it, for each one and what that one can get from the experience. While the counselor works hard at providing personal growth experiences for every single member, attempts to spread the counseling focus to each person at different times during the group's life, he doesn't concern himself with "the group" as an enclave and what "it" is accomplishing. The behavior of individuals is not additive; no quantifying is meaningful.

Were the members of a group to decide to take some action in concert, they would cease to be counseling group and become a political body. Yes, there no goals for a counseling group as a group.

7. What is a member's role in a counseling group?

A role is a set of social expectations. The only expectations that the counselor has for the members are noted above in #5, which is to say that the counselor expects that each person is in the group to work at changing old thinking, feeling, and doing behavior for more positive, self-promoting behavior which is effective for that individual. When a member deviates from such work, the counselor intervenes and helps that client to understand how to go about using the counseling provided in the group more productively. This is a teaching process. Few individuals are skilled in being clients. In the early sessions of the group much time is spent in such teaching and modeling. Members learn effective client behavior quicker in a group than in individual counseling because other clients model the process before their eyes. The counselor also has the expectation that every client is capable of learning and ascribes slow learning to his own lack of expertise, not to any client deficiency.

8. How active should the leader be? What is his role?

The leader is the counselor, the one who knows how to provide help, how to involve others in the counseling process in helpful ways. The leader is never passive. Even when the leader doesn't verbalize much, it is a choice based on criteria for effectiveness, on an assessment of what is going on in the group. For one reason or another some members are more responsive to certain other members than to the counselor: their feedback is more valued, they're closer to the concern expressed, they've recently hurdled the same concern and are full of

enthusiasm over their recent victory and explicit about the how-to-details. The counselor sits back and gauges such exchanges, perhaps pulling from the helpers that which would be the most telling contribution, teaching the potential helper how to help. In the earlier sessions the counselor is very active, but as the members learn how to be more helpful to each other, as they learn the steps in the counseling process, the counselor's activity demurs to orchestrating what the members contribute to each other, coming in to do direct counseling of any given individual when occasion warrants it.

The effective group counselor has a superactive mind during every second of the group time, however, and so the question of his "activity," when it means involvement or participation, hardly can be made simple or formularized. He is the counselor of a number of clients simultaneously and has a responsibility to serve each one. His head is perpetually full of questions: "Ought that concept to be reinforced for Mary, or has she absorbed it? Should I get Tom in on this? He has mastered the guilt he felt over his mother. Is it time to summarize? Is Carl ready to accept the introduction of some specific goals? Should I invoke a role-working structure here? What about Jenny? It's the third session and she has hung back from the beginning?" Questions, questions, options, decisions, study of each member, assessment, searching for structures, choosing appropriate interventions: the counselor's is a very busy mind for the life of the group. To counsel in a group is to work hard. I know of no work that is more difficult.

9. What are the dangers in a counseling group? What if someone has a psychotic episode?

Presuming a skilled, a masterfully competent counselor, there are no dangers. The effective counselor is an expert at diagnosis and can read the signs in an individual's behavior

which indicate that some intolerance level is being reached. Under such circumstances this means that the counselor intervenes, takes responsibility for providing support, shifting the focus, or whatever is appropriate. Without this diagnostic skill of guaging the effect of interpersonal action on a given client or the ability to realistically read what is going on in an individual, how that individual is reacting to self-perceived stress, without a repertoire of strategies to employ, significant interventions to make, the odds that a member might be harmed in some way go up. But they are still slim. Brittle people experience much more stress in ordinary living than what a counselor would allow to happen in a group session. This question of dangers really can be given no pat answer as it relates to the competency of the counselor in any given instance.

10. Suppose you aren't competent to handle a problem that a member brings up?

Non-risk-taking counselors are quick to abdicate for their own safety and prematurely invoke the thought of: "This is over my head. Let's avoid it." The group counselor learns not to assume incompetency too quickly and explores the possibilities with the group, involving others, probing to determine if some resource for genuine help exists in this or that member. When all avenues are exhausted, it is referral time, a skill in itself. Usually this is done outside the group, helping the client to be aware of specific helpful resources in the community and preparing the client to make the best use of them, including getting a commitment to follow through. Such a commitment is best made in the group: if the client has vowed before a number of others to seek specific help, the likelihood that the client will persist increases.

11. Do you ever kick anyone out of a group?

I never have. Over time, there have been drop-outs, usually because they prematurely assumed that they would not derive enough from the experience and it was a waste of their time, and some occasionally out of fear that something harmful would happen and they were unwilling to risk finding out if this were indeed so. From time to time I have dealt outside the group with members whose in-group behavior was grossly overt or inappropriate, detrimental to others. Some of these individuals responded favorably after a single conference; others required individual counseling co-terminously with the group sessions and a great deal of special in-group support or monitoring.

12. How do you handle prolonged silence?

These days, there is seldom any silence in the groups I counsel, and if it occurs, it lasts only a minute or so, a restful time. All it takes for a group not to be silent is one person talking, and the counselor can choose anyone in the group and start counseling that person. Protracted periods of silence in groups occur when the leader is passive. But this question is answered fully elsewhere in a detailed discussion full of practical steps for those who find group silence to be troublesome (See: Vriend, J. and Dyer, W. W. "Effectively Handling Silence in Counseling Groups." The Canadian Counsellor, January, 1975.)

13. What about strong emotions, when people get angry, enraged, or break down and cry?

A counselor deals with emotions all the time, is conscious of what anyone in the group is feeling at any given moment. Emotional behavior is the key to what a person is thinking, and proficiency in reading emotions is a prime part of the counselor's expertise. Whether weak or strong, the counselor understands that they come from and accompany thoughts, and

deeply troublesome thoughts can hardly be expressed unemotionally. The counselor understands, too, that the person manifesting the strong feelings owns them and he need not, indeed, cannot experience them in like fashion. Under these circumstances the counselor is emotionally neutral but completely accepting in a reaching-out way. Most people are not skilled in handling strong emotions in others and tend to avoid them, but handling emotions in others is part of the effective counselor's stock-in-trade. That counselor who finds this difficult has some basic growing cut out for him. Said simply, in a group strong emotions are dealt with by the counselor, neither covered up nor avoided, and they are welcomed to the extent that they often provide a breakthrough when the counseling process seems blocked.

14. What do you do when the group turns on the leader?

Usually I turn on him, too. Whenever something is going on in the group that I don't understand, I look first to my own behavior and my activity in the chronology of preceding events. If the state of affairs is such that the entire group is "attacking" me, finding fault, obviously I have been inexpert in my service delivery. Usually such a state of affairs exists, whether in the whole group or a part, because I have not shared my operational rationale. Doing so frequently dissapates the "attack." But many times it doesn't, and then I learn from the experience. The group teaches me that my counseling behavior is not working. Such learnings are valuable and I welcome them.

15. Are you ever afraid, intimidated, or nervous? If so, do you share your feelings with the group?

Reading my own feelings when they are stronger than neutral, whether positive or negative,

is something I've trained myself to do all of the time I'm in the group. If my feelings can help me to be more effective, I want to use them; if they get in the way, I want to know how to eliminate them, alter them, and I set developmental goals for myself to work toward. These days my own feelings seldom get in the way. I hardly ever feel intimidated, nervous, or afraid. I never feel guilty or bored. Early on in my group counselor development this was not true. I tried sharing what I felt, but learned that this seldom made a positive difference in helping a member or members. The effective group counselor has a rationale for whatever he does, one he can trot out for inspection at any time, and self-disclosure of anything seldom works, for it brings the focus to the counselor, who is not in the group to personally benefit or to use it to meet his own needs in any way. This is not to say that self-disclosure, when used with discretion for a particular purpose, does not sometimes work. My personal guide is: if I have doubts about doing so, I pass up the opportunity.

16. Does a group ever meet without the leader being there?

In a planned way and for a purpose, yes. No one can predict how a particular constellation of individuals will function together nor can a counselor predict how he will function within it. In certain groups, it sometimes happens that the counselor's presence, due to the way events have evolved, acts as an inhibitor. A counselor sensitive to this might choose to schedule a session or part of a session in his absence. Usually members open up to each other and are able to become more cohesively confrontive when the counselor resumes his position and whatever was in the way gets ironed out. According to the same reasoning I might divide a group into subgroups for a time, perhaps visiting these subgroups and sitting in, perhaps not. Again the employment of such tactics is a decision based on an accurate assessment of what is going on

in a group and sound counseling principles, never "just for the hell of it."

17. What about the use of group exercises, role-working, or special structures?

Again, yes, use them, but for a sound counseling purpose. It behooves any group counselor, it immeasurably broadens his competence, to have at his disposal as many structures, strategies, procedures, techniques as exist. In Counseling Techniques That Work, Wayne Dyer and I have devoted an entire chapter to role-working (Chapter 14) and another to detailed instructions telling when and how to use a large number of special structures (Chapter 10) .

18. What about co-leading?

Members can derive more help in a group that is effectively co-led than in one where only one counselor leads. There are many reasons why this so: members can be more thoroughly observed, more behavior can be picked-up on, the leaders can consult, give each other feedback, plan, work in consort or tandem, relieve each other, employ two different styles simultaneously, provide contrast, support, or a model. These and more reasons for co-leading make it a preferred mode. Without going into all the ramifications, let it be noted, however, that co-leading means equal status for both counselors, and that a group co-led by counselors from two different counseling orientations and theoretical backgrounds seldom works well. As a matter of fact, co-counselors from different orientations usually succeed in confusing and fractionalizing the group and diminishing productive behavioral change outcomes.

19. How do you judge whether a group session has been productive?

By one criterion: the extent to which individual clients behave more effectively in their

worlds outside the group. For clients to behave in new self-enhancing ways in the group is but a first step, a prelude to transferring these learnings to their personal worlds, a transference which completes the counseling process. Beginners frequently report that they had a "terrifically good session" because "everyone participated," or for some similar reason, erroneously stroking themselves. Better that few participate and someone changes than everyone participates and no one changes.

20. You talk about the group counselor being an expert. How does one get trained?

Unfortunately there is no one place, no one training program that I know of where one can go through it and graduate the masterfully competent group counselor. Certain advanced degree programs for counselors have more course offerings than others. Workshops in various group approaches are continuously being offered by professional organizations. There are books and articles. For the person committed to professional development as a group counselor, however, these are but a beginning, even if one availed one's self of them all. One becomes competent through practice. And the best way to begin is in apprenticeship to someone already competent, co-leading groups with the journeyman counselor. Nor is there ever an end to being an effective group counselor, a point at which there is no more to learn. And, from my point of view, that is a positive professional derivative: counseling in groups never becomes dull.

REFERENCES

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